

2021 edition



Flu vaccine

for primary and secondary school pupils



Flu can be serious

The flu vaccine is offered to all primary and secondary school pupils in Scotland. It is normally given at school between October and December.

NHS Scotland recommends your child receives their flu vaccine this year.

This is for three reasons:

1. Flu can be serious, even for healthy children.
2. To reduce the risk of your child spreading flu to friends and family.
3. To help prevent the flu virus putting extra strain on our NHS services this winter.



It's really important that you complete and return your child's consent form as soon as possible.

What is flu?



- Influenza (flu) is an infectious virus and can be serious.
- The flu virus spreads through the air when people cough or sneeze, or by touching surfaces where it has landed then touching their eyes, nose and mouth.
- Even healthy children can become seriously ill from flu.
- Flu can lead to complications that may result in hospitalisation or even death.
- Every year in Scotland, children are hospitalised for the treatment of flu or its complications.

Symptoms of flu

Flu symptoms are worse than a normal cold and may include:

- stuffy nose, dry cough and sore throat
- fever and chills
- aching muscles and joints
- headaches
- extreme tiredness.

These symptoms can last between two and seven days. Some children have a very high temperature, sometimes without other obvious symptoms, and may need to go to hospital for treatment.

Flu and COVID-19

It's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading this autumn and winter. Flu is a respiratory virus so it has similar symptoms to COVID-19. For more information visit www.nhsinform.scot/childflu

Flu can be serious

In some cases flu can lead to complications. These can include:

- bronchitis
- pneumonia
- painful middle-ear infection
- vomiting
- diarrhoea.

Flu can be even more serious for people with health conditions (for examples, asthma, heart, kidney, liver, or neurological disease, diabetes, immunosuppression or a spleen that does not work fully) and can make their condition worse.

In the worst cases, flu can lead to disability and even death.



The flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is the safest, most effective protection against flu.

It will reduce the risk of your child getting flu or spreading it to friends and family who are at greater risk from flu, such as grandparents or people with health conditions.

How is the vaccine given?

The flu vaccine is given as a nasal (nose) spray into each nostril. It's quick and painless and there is no need to sniff or inhale the vaccine. It will just feel like a tickle in the nose.



The nasal vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatine (pork gelatine), which is used in many essential medicines. The gelatine helps to keep the vaccine viruses stable so that the vaccine provides the best protection against flu. Many faith groups, including Muslim and Jewish communities, have approved the use of vaccines containing gelatine. However, it's your choice whether or not you want your child to get the nasal spray vaccine.

The nasal spray vaccine is a much more effective vaccine than the injected flu vaccine and is the preferred option. If you do not want your child to get the nasal spray vaccine for religious reasons, you may request that your child is given the vaccine by injection – tick the appropriate box on the consent form.



You will need to complete a new consent form for your child every year of school. The injectable alternative will not automatically be offered – you need to tick the box every year.

NHS Scotland will make sure the vaccine is given safely. Strict infection prevention and control measures will be in place.

Is the vaccine safe?

All medicines (including vaccines) are tested for safety and efficacy before they are allowed to be used. Once they're in use, the safety of vaccines continues to be monitored. The nasal spray flu vaccine has been used safely since 2014 and millions of doses of the vaccine have been given to children in the UK.



Will the vaccine cause any side effects?



headache



muscle aches



runny or
blocked nose

As with all medicines, side effects of the flu vaccine are possible but usually mild. They may include a headache and muscle aches, a runny or blocked nose. Less common side effects include a nosebleed after the nasal spray vaccine. If your child receives the injectable vaccine, they may experience a painful, heavy feeling or tenderness in the arm. These side effects usually go away after a couple of days and you do not need to do anything about them.

These side effects are much less serious than developing flu or complications associated with flu.

How well does the vaccine work?

The annual vaccine offers protection against the most common types of flu virus that are around each winter.

The flu vaccine should start to protect most children about 10 to 14 days after they receive their vaccination.

Over the last few years the flu vaccine has worked very well, providing protection against flu. It has also reduced the chance of spreading flu into the wider community.

Are there any reasons not to have the vaccine?

Your child should not have the vaccine if:

- they're very unwell (for example, with a fever, diarrhoea or vomiting)
- their asthma is worse than usual (they are wheezing more or have had to use their inhaler more than they normally do in the three days before their vaccination).

If your child has an egg allergy they can safely have the nasal spray vaccine, unless they've had a life-threatening reaction to eggs and spent time in hospital.

Otherwise there is no reason to delay getting the vaccine.

An alternative injectable form of the vaccine is available for those who cannot have the nasal spray vaccine. This includes children who:

- have a suppressed immune system because they are getting treatment for serious conditions, such as cancer, or if they have had a transplant
- have a serious condition which affects the immune system, such as severe primary immunodeficiency
- live with or are in close regular contact with very severely immunocompromised people who require isolation
- are taking regular high doses of oral steroids for asthma control
- have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine
- are undergoing salicylate treatment (for example taking aspirin).

Can the flu vaccine give my child flu?

No. The virus in the vaccine does not cause flu. It helps build up immunity to flu.

Children who do not get the vaccine are not at risk of catching flu from those who have had the vaccine. It is not necessary to avoid attending school during the period when the vaccine is being given or in the following weeks. The only exception to this would be children who are extremely immunocompromised (have a weakened immune system).

Does my child need a second dose?

Almost all children will only need one dose of the flu vaccine. Only certain children will need a second dose (four weeks after the first) to make sure their immunity has built up fully.

A second dose is only needed for children under 9 years old who are getting the flu vaccine for the first time and...

Have a
health condition

or

Are given the
injectable vaccine

Please contact your local NHS Board (find the number on the letter enclosed) to find out about local arrangements.

Does the flu vaccine give protection for life?

No. Flu viruses are constantly changing and a different vaccine has to be made every year to ensure the best protection against flu. This is why the flu vaccine is offered every year during autumn and winter.

What do I do next?

Complete, sign and return your child's consent form to school.

It's not always necessary for secondary school pupils to get consent from their parent or carer to receive their flu vaccine. They may be vaccinated after giving their own consent following discussion with the vaccinator, even if their consent form is not returned. If you have a child in secondary school, talk to them about getting the flu vaccine. It's a decision you should make together.

For information on young people's right to consent visit www.nhsinform.scot/consentunder16

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind about consent after returning the consent form, you should contact your local NHS Board (see letter for contact details).

- To withdraw consent, you must write to your local NHS Board.
- To give consent, you will need to fill in a new consent form.

What if my child misses their vaccination?

Please contact your local NHS Board (find the number on the letter enclosed) to find out about local arrangements for getting their vaccine at another time.

Further information

Visit www.nhsinform.scot/childflu for more information.

You can also talk to a health or immunisation team member, practice nurse or GP.

When to immunise	Diseases protected against	Vaccine given
8 weeks old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B (HepB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotavirus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotavirus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meningitis B (MenB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MenB
12 weeks old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib and HepB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pneumococcal disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pneumococcal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotavirus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotavirus
16 weeks old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib and HepB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meningitis B (MenB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MenB
Between 12 and 13 months old – within a month of the first birthday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hib and meningitis C (MenC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hib/MenC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pneumococcal disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pneumococcal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MMR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meningitis B (MenB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MenB
Every year from age 2 until the end of secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenza (flu) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flu
3 years 4 months old or soon after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-in-one (DTaP/IPV or dTaP/IPV)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MMR (check first dose has been given)
11 to 13 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancers caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) including cervical cancer (in women) and some head and neck, and anogenital cancers (in men and women) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HPV
Around 14 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tetanus, diphtheria and polio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Td/IPV, and check MMR status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meningitis ACWY (MenACWY) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MenACWY

Correct at the time of printing, but subject to change. For the most up-to-date timetable visit:

www.nhsinform.scot/immunisation



Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

For more information, including other formats and translation support:



www.nhsinform.scot/childflu



0800 030 8013



phs.otherformats@phs.scot

Information correct at time of publication.
Please visit www.nhsinform.scot/childflu for
the most up-to-date information.

You have rights in relation to the access and
the use of your personal health information.
For more information about your rights or how
the NHS uses your personal information in
accordance with the General Data Protection
Regulation visit:

www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality

www.nhsinform.scot/data-protection

[www.informationgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/
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